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SCRIPTURE AND REASON,

A P O E M:

CONTAINING

VARIOUS ARGUMENTS

IN REFUTATION OF

Mr PAINE's PAMPHLET

ENTITLED

THE AGE OF REASON.

.....

BY J. OSBORNE,

A BLIND SEAMAN OF SOUTH-SHIELDS.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:

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INTRODUCTION.

AS when a school-boy, eager bent on play,
Towards the icy plain directs his way;
With speed he flies along, nor slack his pace,
Nor lingers, till he gains the wish'd-for place;
But e'er he ventures on, its strength he tries
By ev'ry little art he can devise;
With wary step he treads, now pond'ring stands,
Now, bolder grown, he quits the firmer land;
Urg'd by desire, he still advances on,
Till gain'd the midst, and then his fears are gone:
So thus the Muse in deep suspense survey'd
Her vast design—its great importance weigh'd.
Resolv'd the Scripture's Champion now to stand,
Now thought that it requir'd an abler hand;
All undetermin'd was my wav'ring mind,
Afraid to write, and yet to write inclin'd.

A

So

So hard it seem'd to prove by force of words
The doctrine spurious, deism absurd ;
The arguments of deists to refute,
Remove objections far beyond dispute ;
And to the rational make truth appear
Fair as the morn, and as the noon-tide clear.
Besides my pen, in college stile untaught,
Would by the learned be despis'd, I thought ;
From the tall sons of rhet'ric meet contempt,
Nor from the empty critic be exempt.
Such deep impressions these reflections made,
That I aside my whole intention laid ;
Nor had I enter'd on the world's wide stage,
The Age of Reason's hero to engage,
But these considerations thick did croud,
And with incessant clamour me pursu'd.
Shall crooked Error ope her impious mouth,
And proudly bid defiance to the truth ?
Shall she, with huge gigantic stride advance,
At revelation shake her poison'd lance ?
And shall I not the cause of truth espouse,
Defend, and also bid the world to rouse,
Invoke each tongue, and call forth ev'ry pen,
To crush the common foe of God and Men ?

Yes,

Yes, I, regardless of the critic's sneer,
 Will Revelation's advocate appear.
 I, from the pious, shall a welcome meet,
 And in the candid find a calm retreat;
 The trav'ler, also, nighted on his way,
 Will joy to see, altho' a feeble ray.
 Thus like the restless deep by adverse winds,
 So adverse passions to's'd my troubled mind.
 At length resolv'd, determin'd, I began,
 Collected fit materials, form'd my plan:
 Nor have my thoughts on such a great concern,
 Without deep study been together drawn.
 I heard, all ear, the Age of Reason read,
 And mark'd the author in his heaviest tread;
 Where he, with firmest grasp, the pillars press'd,
 On which the Christian's hopes of comfort rest:
 Then try'd the subject, big with mystery,
 How far consistent with the Deity;
 In Reason's scales I weigh'd each evidence,
 For scripture as for deism's defence;
 Nor was I bias'd from a principle
 Of education, or of party zeal;
 But ardent fought the truth to ascertain,
 Free to embrace it, tho' reveal'd by PAINE:

Nor think me impious, 'cause I this assert,
Else blame the Turk who with his koran parts.
The Turk and Christian each himself deceives,
Who ne'er investigates what he believes.
Full oft, when Night within her sable vest
Had wrapt the world, and men were sunk to rest,
Soft balmy slumber from my eye-lids fled,
And Twilight found me reas'ning in my bed ;
A demonstrative proof at least to find,
Of that which most concerns the human kind.
The world, to whom this Treatise I present,
Must judge how far it answers the intent.

SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE AND REASON,

A POEM.



O Thou, whose eye pervades immensity,
Who ever was, and still the same must be!
Whose boundless power and wisdom vast unknown
The rolling spheres in silent language own!
Great God! I thee invoke, my soul inspire
With energy—with pure poetic fire!
Illumine my darkness, O thou source of light!
Direct my pen, O guide the Muse's flight!
As vent'rous on in quest of Truth she soars,
The pathless deep of Mystery explores;
Where Reason, led by Faith, implicitly
Gropes in the vale of dark uncertainty.

'Twas at thy call, Omnipotent, up sprung,
And in vacuity suspended hung,

The

The lump inanimate, unfashion'd, rude,
 The homogeneous mass of matter crude,
 Of which creation, formless, till by thee
 Reduc'd to form—exactest symmetry.
 Then, by thy finger touch'd, amazing scene!
 Was put in motion Nature's vast machine;
 Revolving orbs began their mystic dance,
 And open'd the school of Science in th' expanse.
 Thus the Almighty form'd the fabric fair,
 And swath'd the new-born worlds in ambient air:
 Then grew beneath his forming hands, the frame
 Of man, and he a living soul became.
 Perfection, with her signet deep impress'd
 The spacious whole, but chief the human breast.
 Had ought imperfect been of all that was
 Created by the first mysterious cause,
 'Twould argue in the Deity defect,
 Impeach, as lacking skill, the architect;
 How would it plunge us in a vast abyss
 Of endless reasoning, such a thought as this!
 Man, a fair transcript of th' original,
 All rectitude, nor spot was found at all;
 Right Reason rul'd the little rising state,
 And ev'ry passion kept subordinate.

But

But say, was man when from his Maker's hand
 Thus perfect sent, was he decreed to stand
 Invariably the same, or free to swerve,
 Abuse, or else his rectitude preserve?
 Was there in man a pow'r inherent, say,
 To serve, or his Creator disobey?
 If not, it follows man at best had been
 No better than a well-contriv'd machine;
 And if deny'd the freedom of his will,
 For actions surely not responsible,
 Bound by necessity, he disobey'd,
 Or forc'd obedience to his Maker paid.
 Crude contradiction, this absurdity,
 Debasing MAN, but more the DEITY.
 But grant to man free agency, as just
 A pow'r to curb, or yield to latent lust;
 It follows that a rule must have been given,
 A moral law prescrib'd for man by heav'n;
 A law exactly suited to his state,
 By which he might his actions regulate;
 Hence it is plain, responsible to be,
 For breach of duty in the least degree:
 This, I presume, will evidently clear,
 To ev'ry sober thinking man appear;

But

But how reveal'd to man his Maker's will,
 Say, verbally, or written legible?
 On the creation's ample volume, where
 Man might behold in characters most fair :
 'Tis so, the Deist faith, nor needed more
 To influence man his Maker to adore ;
** There be the signs of Deity might trace,*
His pow'r, his wisdom, providence, and grace ;
No other revelation e'er has been,
But this which is in the creation seen ;
This can alone, unchang'd by man remain,
All other, then, superfluous is, and vain.
 Thus much the Deist, and in answer, I,
 To his assertion, heterodox, reply :
 As our first parent in probation stood,
 So heav'n all wise; all holy; just and good,
 Was bound such light on Adam to confer,
 That he, through lack of knowledge, might not err.
 Hence man was furnish'd with a reason clear,
 With senses, feeling, smell, taste, eye, and ear.

* The substance of the lines printed in Italics throughout the work is taken from the Age of Reason.

By these, as channels, were ideas brought,
 Arrang'd in order at Reflection's court ;
 His wond'ring eye might evidently trace,
 The first great cause in Nature's lovely face ;
 By pleasing taste, by smell of fragrant flow'r,
 By feeling, feel himself th' Eternal's pow'r :
 But what idea of the great I AM,
 Through the fair portals of the hearing came ?
 'Tis known that if the ear had heard no sound,
 The pliant tongue would ever have been bound ;
 No sense of hearing, then the Deity
 Unfung by lyre or vocal strains would be ;
 Hence I infer, as speech to men alone
 Belong, nor to the brute creation known,
 That sounds distinct, articulate, and clear,
 Have penetrated first the human ear ;
 Words of the most import, no doubt he heard,
 When first the door of hearing was unbarr'd ;
 But what of most import for man to learn,
 What was it that would Adam most concern ?
 Surely to know the state in which he stood—
 A threaten'd evil, and a promis'd good.
 Is it absurd to think the Deity,
 Whose works are done in order, harmony,

Would deign his new-made creature, man, to teach
 His sov'reign will, when first man breath'd by speech!
 How would the accents sink upon his soul?—
 Solemn, as when the distant thunders roll!
 Perception's calm reflection would awake,
 The pliant tongues in praise its silence break.
 Think not that I th' Almighty would confine,
 T' effect, by second causes, his design;
 No: I am conscious, heav'n need but to will,
 'Tis done by pow'r incomprehensible:
 Heav'n, doubtless, without secondary aid,
 The gift of speech to man might have convey'd;
 But surely 'tis most rational, most plain,
 That man the pow'r of speech did thus obtain;
 If so, then surely deism is vain.

I grant that Adam might in nature read
 Instructive lectures, legible indeed;
 Might well conclude, from what he saw around,
 The spacious heav'ns and earth with verdure crown'd,
 There was a cause, a great Eternal One,
 Who, whatsoe'er his eyes beheld, had done;
 Whose pow'r and wisdom so refulgent shone,
 Who form'd him man, he ought to love alone.
 But say, did Adam know he was to die,
 Or could the works of Nature tell him why?

Why doom'd, reluctant, to resign his breath,
 In pain and sickness close his eyes in death?
 Could he, by contemplating Nature, learn
 His dissolution in the least discern?
 If not, this knowledge must have been convey'd,
 A revelation unto Adam made;
 For sure, when man into existence brought,
 Found in himself a principle of thought;
 When first to heav'n he rais'd his wond'ring eyes,
 'Tis nat'ral this reflection would arise;—
 “ What am I? Say, from whence, and how I came,
 “ Must I for ever be as now the same?
 “ Or at some distant period change my state,
 “ Again become extinct, annihilate?”
 And if constrain'd to wait till time should prove
 The doubtful case,—uncertainty remove,
 How would it mar the joys which heav'n had sent,
 While man remain'd in such predicament—
 Thought on the rack of keen Enquiry tost,
 In endless search, in pathless labyrinths lost!
 But heav'n, delighting not in human woe,
 Reveals to man what needful is to know,
 That is relating to his present state,
 What most may tend his peace to consummate.

'Tis folly, and presumption too, in man,
 To wish for more the Deity to scan :
 Hence as ideas by perception find,
 Or through reflection enter to the mind ;
 It follows, then, by one of these two gain'd,
 That knowledge* first by man had been obtain'd ;
 But as, by contemplating Nature's frame,
 No idea of man's dissolution came ;
 As neither feeling, smelling, taste, nor sight,
 Could on the subject cast the smallest light,
 It follows, therefore, that man must have known,
 Have had th' idea through the ear alone ;
 As man, 'tis prov'd, did in probation stand,
 Responsible for breach of Heav'n's command,
 Free in himself his duty to fulfil,
 And act obsequious to his Maker's will :
 So when th' Almighty did his mandate give,
 Man heard, do this or die, reverse to live.
 'Twas then the dread idea he receiv'd,
 Too little was the threaten'd death believ'd ;
 But this objection doubtless will arise,
 Tho' Adam could not learn from earth nor skies,

* The knowledge of death.

From studying Nature, ascertain that he
 Was doom'd to die or live eternally;
 Yet justly this conclusion he might draw,
 If e'er a breathless bird or beast he saw,
 That he would also cease to live and move;
 What he beheld in part to him did prove:
 I grant it just, admit it all to be,
 Yet Adam still would be quite out at sea,
 Should this reflection rise within his breast,
 Will spirit, stripp'd of matter, still exist?
 Will thought, when from the body, live distinct?
 Or separated, will it be extinct?
 Say, then, could man from what he might see die,
 Resolve the doubt—the Gordian knot untie?
 No, reason calls for revelation's aid
 To guide her through, beyond death's gloomy shade;
 All else inadequate, the world must own
 This most important subject to make known;
 But why was Adam, as are all mankind,
 To taste the bitter pangs of death consign'd?
 Say, author of the Age of Reason, why
 Were Adam and his offspring doom'd to die?
 Death ev'ry cent'ry sweeps the stage of life,
 While others press to act a scene of strife:

Thus

Thus generations on each other hurl'd,
 Pass o'er the bridge of time, then quit the world.
 I ask the source of Common Sense again,
 Say, canst thou tell the obvious cause?—explain ;
 Obvious, indeed, to each impartial mind,
 Altho' unskill'd in science, unrefin'd :
 No need to travel to the fixed stars,
 Through fields of æther roam to search the cause ;
 No need to trace the paths of comets dire,—
 At ev'ry planet for the cause enquire :
 No : nearer home may find intelligence ;
 Man, in thy breast read disobedience :
 Can we suppose that God all wise and good,
 Th' eternal source of all perfection, would
 Give life to man, that he might only know
 (Unknown to none) anxiety and woe ?
 What son of man, exempt from trouble found
 Disease and sickness compass all around ?
 Brought forth in sorrow, Lo ! he lives in pain,
 Then drops into his mother earth again.
 Was it consistent with the Deity,
 To sentence man to death and misery ?
 E'er he, by some offence, just cause had giv'n,
 Brought on himself the killing wrath of heav'n ?

Can God, like some great despot, fraught with pride,
 Borne down the stream of Passion's rapid tide,—
 Can he to shew his pow'r, to gratify
 His caprice, thus create mankind to die?
 No: far the thought from me—from all be driv'n,
 Righteous and true are all the ways of heav'n;
 'Tis man has broke the law his Maker gave,
 By sin brought death, and ope'd the yawning grave;
 And num'rous evils, bursting like a flood,
 Have since that time delug'd the world with blood:
 Grant, then, man fallen, heav'n still is justify'd,
 If not, the truth of God must be deny'd;
 But God is just, and cannot but be so,
 Man he has sinn'd, and sin has brought his woe:
 If man be as he was created, then
 No moral evil would be known to men;
 But surely evil is in all men found,
 Its dire effects throughout the world abound:
 See rage burst like a desolating storm,
 Assault mankind in ev'ry hideous form;
 Millions, beneath Oppression's iron rod,
 Are crush'd, and Vi'lence fills the world with blood.
 Wild Discord hurls the apple from her hand,
 And hostile armies thick in battle stand;

Contention

Contention wraps th' abodes of men in flames,
 All, all in Reason's ear man's fall proclaims.
 Hence it is obvious, Adam did by sin
 Give evil in our nature—origin ;
 Imbib'd the poison at the fountain-head,
 No wonder through the stream it should be spread.
 As the all wise Creator had design'd
 That Adam he should generate his kind,
 Produce his likeness, which, before the fall,
 Was a fair transcript of th' original ;
 The image of his Maker, God exprefs,
 Which doth consist in moral righteousness ;
 And as included in his loins would be
 The whole of man, his num'rous progeny,
 It follows, then, of course, when Adam fell,
 When he against his sov'reign did rebel,
 That we, then in his loins, would with him fall,
 One common fate was to include us all ;
 But as our sin was feminal as due,
 Our punishment it should have been so too ;
 What then the consequence? amazing thought!
 Man to existence never had been brought ;
 For had our sire receiv'd his just desert,
 (We in his loins, and of himself a part)

Must have remain'd in him eternally,
 To suffer for offending Deity;
 Unless some satisfaction adequate,
 Could have been made man's crime to palliate:
 Strict justice doth admit of no relax,
 But on the guilty to the full exacts;
 As for annihilation, 'twould evade
 No recompence that way to justice made;
 A free discharge to man had then been giv'n,
 Who, tho' extinct, would triumph'd over heav'n.
 But men exist; and hence 'tis evident,
 Adam has been exempt from punishment:—
 That is, his first offence has been forgiv'n,
 By virtue of atonement made to heav'n;
 Of consequence, his then included seed,
 The millions that were from him to proceed;
 For sure, had justice not been satisfy'd,
 We must, with Adam, in his loins, have dy'd:
 That is, in him endur'd th' Almighty's curse,
 A deathless death, than worst of evils, worse;
 Thus men existing, evidence to all,
 Man's restoration from his rueful fall.
 Here let the speculative Deist read
 A paradox, complex to him, indeed;

By man came death and all the ghastly train,
 The king of terrors, arm'd with mortal pain ;
 By man, the resurrection from the dead,
 Death and destruction by him captive led.
 I ask the Deist, say, what recompence ?
 What satisfaction for the least offence.
 Against thy great Creator's just commands,
 Whose justice, unrelenting, full demands ?
 Or art thou, as thy Maker, holy, clean ?
 Let Conscience speak, that monitor within ;
 Did Conscience ne'er, when prompt to speak thy
 tongue,
 Prevent the lie, with " thou art doing wrong ?"
 Art thou a stranger to its thund'ring call,
 The voice of Conscience heard so oft by all ?
 Has keen Remorse, not once for actions past,
 Or conscious Guilt, caus'd pain within thy breast ?
 And is, offending heav'n's Almighty Lord,
 (Who ought by all his works to be ador'd)
 Is it of no import to thee at all
 Beneath th' Eternal's fiery wrath to fall ?
 Say, will repentance for a length of time—
 Will floods of tears pour'd forth, wash off the crime ?

No :

No : thy offence, fond man, adjudg'd will be
 According to th' Almighty's dignity ;
 Infinite justice, infinitely claims,
 Till then, unsheath'd, the Sword of Vengeance flames.
 I ask, what restitution can'st thou make,
 To one whose life, perhaps, thy hand might take ?
 Canst thou recall again the spirit fled,
 Or raise the breathless body from the dead ?
 Much less canst thou atonement make to heav'n,
 For one, of numberless, offences given ;
 And art thou bent, determin'd still to play
 The madman's part, nor Reason's voice obey ?
 Still to refuse the rich provision made,
 The Mediator's interposing aid ?
 The only mean, all other means are vain,
 By which mankind salvation can obtain :
 Why start to hear a Mediator nam'd,
 The doctrine of a substitute proclaim'd ?
 Preposterous the idea ! dost thou cry,—
 Unjust that one should for another die ;
 I grant, with mortals, 'tis unjust, indeed,
 To suffer man for others' crimes to bleed ;
 Each for himself, alone the smart must feel,
 Nor substitute allow'd to sheath the steel ;

It argues human inconsistency,
 When human laws with reason disagree :
 But let us now suppose some despot Lord
 Proverb'ly just, strict, punctual to his word,
 Enacts a law, its nature and intent,
 To prove his subjects evil to prevent ;
 And he who dares the royal mandate break,
 A satisfaction with his life must make.
 Ere long, the Sov'reign's Son, his best belov'd,
 Is to his Sire accus'd, and guilty prov'd ;
 Mercy inclines the Sire his Son to save,
 But, with his law, the sentence, too, he gave.
 I ask, then, was it just the Sire should die,
 His Son to save, the law to satisfy ?
 Remind, the Giver of the law's to none
 Responsible, but to himself alone.
 'Twill, doubtless, grate upon thy tender ear,
 And shock thy infant feelings, this to hear :
 But say, that pow'r which rides upon the storm,
 That walks in darkness, wonders to perform ;
 Who clothes himself with Light and Excellence,
 Whose loins are girded with Omnipotence,
 Say, scientific sage, why might not he,
 In human nature veil divinity ?

Might not the rays of Deity divine,
 Unveil'd (too strong for sense) thro' matter shine,
 And in the form of mortal man fulfil
 The pre-determin'd counsels of his will?
 And as by man his sov'reign law was broke,
 Bear in himself for man th' avenging stroke;
 By this to favour rais'd, the fallen race,
 The covenant of Works; now chang'd to grace.
 The Deist next exclaims, *The mystery,*
The arithmetic of christianity;
That three distinct are one, as one exist,
'Tis mystery this, or rather, mist on mist:
A contradiction this in terms implies,
Of consequence the Christian system lies,
The essence, sure, of all absurdity
Sprung from the tail of Heathen 'thology.
 In answer, let me ask the learned sage,
 The wond'rous wonder of the present age,
 Say, canst by searchings, to perfection find,
 Fathom the depth of the Almighty's mind?
 Canst comprehend the pow'r which gave the earth
 And all her neighb'ring sister planets birth?
 Or have the massy orbs by thee been weigh'd,
 Or by thy finger was the balance stay'd?

Canst

Canst thou the stars, their distance, number, tell,
 Or on those worlds what sort of natives dwell?
 Are they obedient, say, or prone to crimes,
 And what the nature of those distant climes?
 Will Tempest rend the rocks at thy command,
 Or element'ry troops in battle stand?
 No, surely no; thy strength, thy wisdom small,
 Compar'd with God, it nothing is at all:
 Too dim is Reason's eye to reach the height,
 Tho' science lends her glass to aid the sight;
 Thou dost acknowledge, yes, thou dost it own,
 God only to himself is fully known;
 Why, then, dost thou deride that mystery,
 Because it inconsistent seems to thee?
 A footy native of the torrid zone,
 An artless Indian, to the world unknown;
 Tell him of icy mountains form'd by frost,
 Or fields of snow, how would his mind be lost?
 What gross ideas of a frozen stream,
 How contradictory would the story seem?
 Hence it is plain, truth may absurd appear,
 When plac'd beyond the limits of our sphere;
 And what a contradiction seems to thee,
 Perhaps th' effect of ignorance may be.

So little dost thou know of God, at most
 He doth exist, but how thou nothing know'st :
 Nay, man is altogether mystery,
 I'd almost said a second Trinity ;
 The mental pow'rs composing man, the whole
 Can but, in strictest sense, be call'd one soul ;
 And tho' distinct each faculty, as one
 They all exist, and act in unison.
 But might not God assume a vehicle,
 A human form, his purpose to fulfil ;
 Be here conversant, at this time express,
 And act the same at the Antipodes ?
 Perplexing this, hard to conceive, indeed,
 Yet, sure, the Deist will admit the creed ;
 Acknowledge, then, nor thus most impiously,
 Despise the Christian faith—each mystery ;
 Why het'rogeneous falsehood are they term'd,
 When by substantial evidence confirm'd ?
 This proves the scripture's Origin Divine,
 As years roll round the truths more clearly shine ;
 Predictions op'ning to th' attentive mind,
 Leave not the shadow of a doubt behind ;
 Look on the sacred page,* and there behold,
 The fate of rising empires clear foretold ;

* Daniel, Chap. 7.

Read there the curse denounc'd on Israel's sin,
 And ask the Jews how far fulfill'd has been ;
 The Roman Eagles, at Jehovah's call,
 Rapacious on devoted victims fall ;
 Firm in their talons grasp the helpless prey,
 From Salem bear the hapless tribes away ;
 Scatter'd abroad, since then they rove around,
 O'er all the earth like fugitives are found ;
 No rest the soles of Hebrew feet can find,
 A proverb and a bye-word to mankind ;
 Oft from one nation to another driv'n,
 A prey to cruel persecutors giv'n.
 Now, ye impartial, read the prophesy,*
 Judge, doth it not with what I've said agree ?
 Again, see Babylon, † the proud, the great,
 How amply's been fulfill'd her threaten'd fate ?
 Where now, the iron walls, the gates of brass,
 The cloud-capt towers, demolish'd all, alas !
 All but the mem'ry to oblivion hurl'd
 Of Babylon, once mistress of the world ;
 Where once was heard harmonious pleasing sounds,
 Where gorgeous temples did the prospect bound ;

* Deuteronomy, Chap. 28.

† Isaiah, Chap. 13.

Now screeching owls disgust the trav'ler's ear,
 And hissing reptiles fill his soul with fear :
 Horror, in short, broods o'er with raven wings,
 The once fair seat of proud Assyria's kings.
 Are these no striking proofs of prophecy,
 Which proves the truth of christianity ?
 Indeed the two so closely do connect,
 Who doth the one, the other must reject ;
 Perhaps aware of this, the Deist doth,
 Without reserve, deny the truth of both ;
 Not recollecting that he form'd his plan
 From scripture, pourtray'd out—the Rights of Man :
 Unworthy PAINÉ, such inconsistency,
 First to admit, then reject, prophecy.
 Again, e'er the Messiah did appear,
 (Whose name let all the sons of men revere,)
 Did no prediction previous notice give
 Of his approach, to those who then did live ?
 Consult the Jews, their records testify,
 Altho' themselves the Lord of Life deny ;
 Nor vaunt with indirect ironic words,
 The Jews prove christianity absurd :
 Did not the Jews, do not their progeny,
 Look for the Prince foretold by prophecy ?

D

They

They do believe, and thou dost, too, confess,
 That Christ did live—taught moral righteousness ;
 Now seventeen hundred years have roll'd around,
 Have they at all the promis'd Saviour found ?
 Or has the sign of Christ appear'd since then,
 Of his approach to these deluded men ?
 Missed, like thee, by gross ideas vain,
 They look for Christ t' erect an earthly reign ;
 To bow the nations to his mighty sway,
 And make the world, subvervient, them obey ;
 Contrary to the word of prophecy,
 Which had declar'd he Prince of Peace should be.
 'Tis obvious, then, to the impartial eye,
 The cause why Jews the Christian scheme deny ;
 But let us weigh th' internal evidence,
 The gospel teaches love and innocence ;
 It clearly points the way to happiness,
 Exhorting all mankind to live in peace ;
 As ye would men should do to you again,
 So do to them—the gospel rule is plain ;
 Each brutal passion of the human soul
 The gospel subjugates, restrains the whole :
 In short, 'tis calculated to refine,
 To make men more angelic, more divine.

But

But tho' the gospel merits highest fame,
 The Deist thus against it doth exclaim;—
That 'tis a fraud impos'd upon mankind,
I firmly am persuaded in my mind ;
 Whether th' assertion is more base than weak,
 Judge, ye unbiass'd, which it most bespeaks :
 But I am bound to hope in charity,
 From want of cool reflection it may be,
 Not rightly weighing christianity.
 Now let us for a moment contemplate,
 And try the subject to investigate ;
That such a man as Jesus Christ did live,
Thou dost admit, thou full assent dost give ;
And further, dost acknowledge, own, that he
Instructed men in sound morality :
The base corruptions of the Jews expos'd,
The pride and avarice of their priests disclos'd ;
For this incurr'd their most inveterate rage,
Nor could his life their enmity assuage :
That Pontius Pilate did him crucify,
Thou dost confess, nor ought of this deny.
 Now, let me ask, should we a man behold,
 Opposing ev'ry vice, undaunted, bold,

Whose conduct with his doctrine coincides,
 The scrutiny of Envy's eye derides;
 Who dares reprove the opulent and great,
 When from the path of truth they deviate;
 A patient sufferer, tho' by men revil'd,
 Regardless of the world, its frowns or smiles;
 Who, rather than his upright course refrain,
 Submits to die, by most exquisite pain?
 Could we suppose that such a man design'd
 T' impose upon the world—deceive mankind?
 No: such a thought would shock Humanity,
 A base insult on Common Sense 'twould be:
 Surely we must admit the evidence,
 When 'tis, by Reason, offer'd to the sense.
 When then impos'd, by whom contriv'd the scheme,
 The fraud as baseless as the Deist's dream;
 Had Judas known the fraud, indeed, 'tis plain,
 T'would not have been detected by a PAINÉ;
 Or had his fellows, when they saw their head
 Upon the cross suspended, bleeding, dead;
 Would they not then confounded have retir'd,
 And left him with his projects to 've expir'd?
 Surely 'tis nat'ral to suppose they would,—
 What hope of fruit, when blasted is the bud?

When

When from his gloomy cell Mahomet came
 To broach his hellish fraud by sword and flame,
 Had he detected been, crush'd in the rise,
 With him had perish'd, doubtless, all his lies.
 Grant, then, the airy fraud, by Christ alone
 Contriv'd, conducted, nor by others known;
 Yet, surely, when by Pilate crucify'd,
 The fraud, with its inventor, then had dy'd;
 His foll'wers, doubtless, would have been dispers'd,
 In hist'ry, only, the affair rehears'd:
 Sure, then, the Deist must, he can but own,
 That Christ could of the fraud have nothing known.
 Then, let me ask again, by whom the fraud,
 And when of the deception first was heard?
 Here THOMAS PAINE has acted but unkind,
 To leave me both the men and time to find.
 It seems most likely, then, to have been spread,
 With the report that Christ had left the dead;
 Upon the truth of this depends my all,
 And if Christ rose, then deism must fall.
*The evidence for this, the Deist saith,
 Is not sufficient to support the faith;
 And to maintain his whim, drags to the bar,
 Halt Unbelief, that is, he never saw;*

*Of consequence, his faith he will not rest
 On what another person doth attest ;
 Adding, that Christ should have, like a balloon,
 Burst from the grave at the full blaze of noon ;
 To all Jerusalem at least have been,
 (Why not to the Antipodes, too, seen)
 But here a number, not exceeding ten,
 Must be made proxies for a world of men.
 From what the Deist faith, one might conclude,
 Had there but been a large promiscuous croud,
 Had all Jerusalem been there to view,
 The resurrection, doubtless, would be true :
 As well might PAINÉ, like DYDIMUS, have said,
 I'll not believe that Christ rose from the dead,
 Unless in France I also see him rise ;
 For sure his argument thus much implies.
 Judge, then, how hard a task 'tis to convince
 A PAINÉ, of faithless THOMASES the prince !
 But why the resurrection falsehood term,
 Because a nation did it not affirm ?
 A nation own'd, all Israel heard and saw,
 When God from Sinai thunder'd forth his law !
 And yet dost thou their evidence respect ?
 Thou dost the croud of witnesses reject.*

Here

Here PAINE, opposing THOMAS, all may see,
 How, then, so inconsistent canst thou be?
 Sure, could the Jewish priests have prov'd this charge,
 They doubtless would unto the world at large;
 But where the proof? found in what nation, clime?
 Dost thou reply, 'tis lost through length of time?
 Why not the resurrection evidence?
 Is fraud than truth preserv'd by Providence?
 But ask thy boasted friends the Jews to lend,
 With their united aid—the cause defend:
 The body of th' impostor was, they say,
 Purloin'd by his disciples—stol'n away,
 While fast asleep the Roman soldiers lay.
 But say, by whom the theft was seen, who told?
 (Perhaps the sleeping soldiers might behold).
 Here the unprejudic'd will see, the Jew,
 Not knowing, prove the resurrection true;
 For while the body stolen they attest,
 Christ's death and burial is by them confess'd:
 And that they knew, ere Christ was crucify'd,
 He'd of his resurrection testify'd;
 Else why the soldiers sent the tomb to guard,
 If of this matter they had nothing heard?

But

But to proceed; what end design'd by those,
 Who did the pious fraud at first impose?
Thou say'st, 'cause thou no other end canst find,
They meant by thus imposing on mankind,
A reformation of mythology,
To purge the world from gross absurdity.
 A noble motive, surely, to induce
 Rational minds to suffer all abuse:
 What treatment else could they expect to find,
 Who 'pos'd the then persuasion of mankind?
 They must, they did, incur their Cæsar's frown,
 Embrace the cross, and to the axe bow down;
 Undaunted stem the tide of Pagan rage,
 Brave all the insults of a vicious age;
 Met death, in ev'ry hideous form, unaw'd,
 And all to propagate a well-known fraud:
 How light is thy assertion found, when laid—
 When in the scales of Truth by Reason weigh'd?
 Declare, ye Deists, answer, can ye shew
 An instance of like nature? Surely, no:
 If in the annals of six thousand years,
 Point out the mouldy page where it appears.
 Judge ye impartial, ye judicious, then
 How likely 'tis a fraud impos'd on men?

But

But were the gospel-founders void of light,
 Of true prophetic heav'nly knowledge quite?
 That surest mark by which mankind might steer
 Wide from the funken rocks of Error, clear.
 To future ages, surely, prophecy
 The only evidence of truth must be.
 I ask, had they not their credentials seal'd,
 By gift of prophecy, from Heav'n reveal'd?
 Let an attentive eye, with candour, read
 That sacred book, despis'd by thee, indeed;
 He must confess the rays of pow'r divine,
 Conspicuous in the revelations shine;
 Look round, astonish'd see, how papal Rome
 Now sinks beneath a long-since threaten'd doom;
 He, to whom princes bow'd the suppliant knee,
 And own'd their head infallible to be:
 How is the blaze of glory turn'd to shame,
 And Popish pow'r derided as the name.
 Who, then, can doubt the revelations given,
 To animate the Christian, sent by heav'n?
 But once again, ere from her tow'ring flight
 The Muse descends, from the celestial height;
 May I, nor be irrational, presume,
 When from Vacuity's unfathom'd womb,

This world burst forth, amidst cerulean air;
 To distant worlds appear'd a planet fair;
 Man soon to being call'd, in mind mature,
 As firm of nerve, as intellects were pure;
 Fixt on his mind, his birth would doubtless be,
 And oft recounted to his progeny:
 With what delight, (imagine) would they hear
 Their aged fire the wond'rous tale declare;
 How would they catch the accents as they fell,
 Implore, when done, the tale again to tell?
 They to their offspring, doubtless, would make known
 What the grandfire had to their fathers shewn;
 And tho' by some forgotten, as a dream,
 Th' event, lost in oblivion's pitchy stream;
 Yet still by others it retain'd would be,
 Transmitted by them to posterity:
 Still would be found with men some lasting trait,
 Nor Time's corroding hand obliterate:
 Light once beheld, man must the sense retain,
 Thus on a different subject argues PAINÉ.
 If so, th' account must still by some be known,
 Be somewhere still existing, all must own:
 Then, let us ask the various tribes of men
 Of the creation, how perform'd and when?

Compare th' accounts with that which Moses gave,
 (At least to him ascrib'd) which Christians have;
 How vague, unsatisfact'ry are they found,
 To an enlighten'd mind—a judgment found?
 Hence to th' impartial, this a proof may be
 Of the Mosaic authenticity;
 For if a truth that things by PAINE reveal'd,
 Can never be forgotten, quite conceal'd,
 That Time their mem'ry never can erase,
 As I'm constrain'd to think must be the case,
 Why should th' account of man's formation, then,
 Be lost entirely to surviving men?
 Let THOMAS PAINE assign a reason why,
 If so, he doth what he affirms deny:
 But waving this, because it seems abstruse,
 Let us again reflect upon the Jews,
 That nation, of all others, 'tis confess'd
 First knew Jehovah, God for ever blest;
 Of consequence, would have most wisdom pure,
 Least liable to be impos'd on, sure;
 They, most tenacious, to preserve entire
 Their lineage down to their primeval fire,
 Witness that law which strictly doth discharge
 Cohabitation with the world at large;

And as the knowledge of th' Eternal One,
 Since man's creation must by some be known ;
 Of course th' impartial cannot but allow,
 The Jewish records evidently true.
 If so, then surely christianity,
 Acknowledg'd as a solid truth must be.

Thus, candid reader, I've to thee made known,
 My thoughts on this important subject shewn ;—
 A subject, sure, on which depends thy whole,
 The everlasting welfare of thy soul :
 I warn thee to avoid the deep-laid snare,
 Thy soul at stake, demands thy utmost care ;
 Or hast, or shouldst, thou still be led to read
The Age of Reason's folly, O take heed !
 Be cautious, lest the syren's luring strain,
 Should please thine ear and cause thy heart much pain,
 A serpent may, 'midst flow'rs, itself conceal,
 And, unexpected, bite the trav'ler's heel.
 But jealous lest misled thy mind should be,
 And doubt the truth of christianity,—
 I ask, what evil can to thee accrue,
 Supposing it a fable, all untrue ;
 At most thou only canst resign thy breath,
 All danger, surely, will dissolve in death :

But

But if a truth, what hast thou not to dread
When the great trump shall wake the sleeping dead ?
How wilt thou meet the Judge thou didst despise,
The blasting radiance darting from his eyes ;
The feelings of thy soul, what tongue can tell,
What heart conceive, by half, the woes of hell ?
O then be wise, with all thy heart embrace,
Believe in Christ, the Prince of Truth and Grace.
A madman, surely, he esteem'd must be,
Who risks a certain for uncertainty.

THE END.